

8 Next Steps

Public, resource agency, and tribal input has been considered in completing this Tier 1 process. If the preferred alternative recommended by ADOT is the selected corridor alternative, Tier 2 NEPA documentation will need to be completed before final design and construction of any passenger rail facility can occur. This chapter describes the additional analysis required for Tier 2 studies, NEPA documentation, and design needed to advance to the project level.

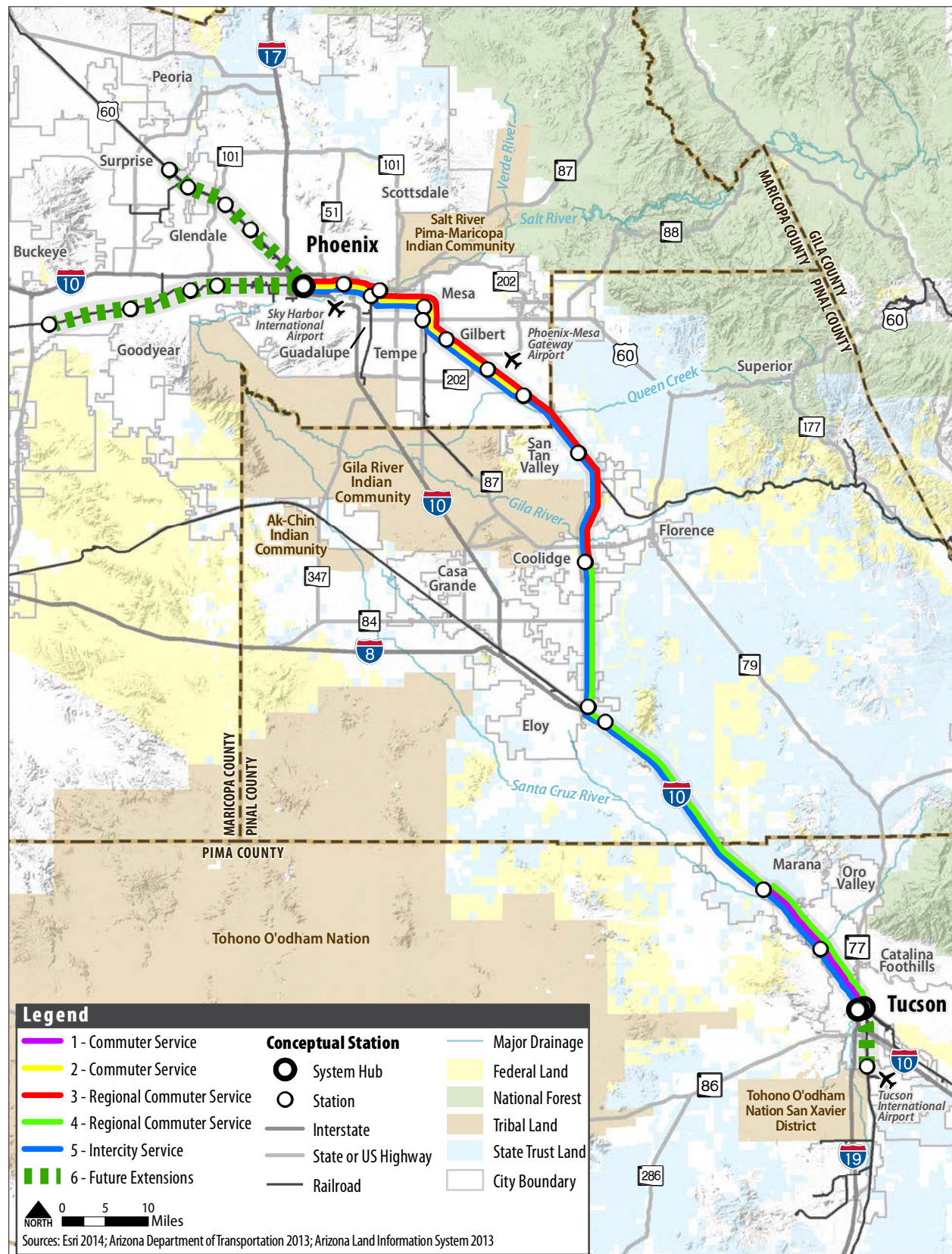
8.1 Tier 1 Completion

This Draft Tier 1 EIS has been issued to solicit input on the corridor alternatives from the public, resource agencies, and tribes. Comments received on this Draft Tier 1 EIS during the comment period will be used to prepare and issue a Final Tier 1 EIS that addresses these comments. FRA will issue a single document that consists of the Final Environmental Impact Statement and Record of Decision pursuant to Pub. L. 112-141, 126 Stat. 405, Section 1319(b), documenting the agencies' decision and identifying any applicable mitigation measures that would be implemented and further studied in subsequent phases. Because this is a Tier 1 NEPA document, most mitigation measures represent commitments to further coordination with the public, resource and regulatory agencies, and tribes during Tier 2 analysis as a project-level design is developed.

8.2 Tier 2 Operable Corridor Sections

As funding becomes available, Tier 2 studies and NEPA documentation would be advanced for logical operable sections of a passenger rail system within the preferred corridor alternative. That is, one or more operable corridor sections could be developed as individual projects that would be composed of components for a passenger rail system between Tucson and Phoenix. Separate Tier 2 NEPA documentation would be prepared for each of the projects identified. The specific class of NEPA document for more detailed analysis of any Tier 2 section has not yet been defined. Any such section would be required to have independent utility with or without construction of other sections. Preliminary design and environmental studies would be conducted in support of a Tier 2 analysis, because the higher level of detail in Tier 2 would be needed to identify the specific resources affected by construction and operation, and the extent of any effects. No individual section of a passenger rail system has been identified for implementation, but the following proposed corridor sections could be evaluated as logical, independent sections subject to available funding and the source of that funding. These corridor sections could also be combined, modified, or revisited in the future based on available funding. Using the Yellow Corridor Alternative as an example, **Figure 8-1** illustrates a number of possible implementation phases, as follows:

Figure 8-1. Possible Implementation Phases



- Tucson to Marana – Commuter service within the Tucson metro area
- Queen Creek/Santan Valley to Phoenix – Commuter service within the Phoenix metro area
- Coolidge to Phoenix – Regional commuter service between Pinal County and Maricopa County
- Coolidge to Tucson – Regional commuter service between Pinal County and Pima County
- Tucson to Phoenix – Intercity service within the selected corridor alternative

8.3 Additional Studies

During Tier 2, further NEPA analyses are anticipated to determine the potential impacts of the proposed project. In addition, coordination and outreach (as needed) would occur during preparation of a Tier 2 analysis to engage the public more fully regarding the effects on property and issues such as station design and other railroad facilities. Input from the outreach effort would be incorporated into the NEPA analysis and project design.

Numerous technical studies would be completed as part of the Tier 2 NEPA analysis to augment the Tier 1 EIS and develop a better understanding of the nature and magnitude of impacts. The analyses would consider avoidance and minimization of impacts on sensitive environmental resources. For each Tier 2 NEPA analysis, the following project-level analyses may be required:

- Detailed local-level alternatives analysis, including route options identified in Tempe and Pinal County, as shown on **Figure 7-1, Figure 7-2**, and Figure.
- Wetland delineations and identification of Section 404 permitting requirements
- Cultural resource surveys and Section 106 consultation
- Threatened and endangered species surveys
- Noise and vibration analysis
- Section 4(f) evaluation
- Section 6(f)
- Phase I Environmental Site Assessments
- Air emissions analysis in nonattainment areas
- Station-area traffic studies

- Engineering surveys

8.4 Coordination with Other Studies

To ensure consistency in the planning of the transportation system and to provide alternative mode opportunities in future or expanding corridors under study, the APRCS will be coordinated with such studies whenever possible and appropriate.

8.5 Mitigation Planning

In addition to the needed studies, mitigation for impacts would also be developed during Tier 2. Anticipated types of mitigation include wetland mitigation, construction timing restrictions for threatened and endangered species, implementation of stormwater pollution and prevention plans, implementation of best management practices, and documentation of historic structures and other properties. Specific mitigation during the Tier 2 process would be determined in consultation with the federal or state agency responsible for assessing impacts on a given resource. As needed, formal consultation would occur with resource agencies to address obligations to minimize and mitigate impacts, such as those obligations under Section 7 of the Endangered Species Act (ESA) and Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). Based on the Tier 1 process, for example, a Section 106 PA could be developed after the Tier 1 EIS that would specify consultation between FRA, Native American tribes, ADOT, and the Arizona SHPO, as well as other consulting parties, for meeting historic preservation compliance requirements. The Tier 2 effort would also require analysis under both Section 4(f) of the Department of Transportation Act and Section 6(f) of the Land and Water Conservation Act, and appropriate mitigation, if needed.

8.6 Project Commitments

This Draft Tier 1 EIS identified mitigation commitments for each relevant resource section in **Chapter 5, Existing Conditions and Environmental Consequences**. During the Tier 1 EIS process, the primary commitments have been to work with the public, public agencies, resource agencies, and tribes to identify the need for specific mitigation measures to be developed during the Tier 2 process that would be implemented during construction and operation of a passenger rail system.

8.7 Phased Implementation

Based on experience with other passenger rail projects, preliminary service development planning as part of the APRCS, and coordination with other transportation agencies, ADOT anticipates that the passenger rail system would be incrementally funded and that construction and operations would be implemented in phases. Within the approximate 20-year planning

horizon specified in the Service Development Plan (SDP), initial and successive phases will be considered through the interim implementation phase, which is the last phase that would be implemented using existing SDP information.

Funding could be initially allocated for improvement of facilities to support higher speeds or to improve/construct particular stations and maintenance and layover facilities. Service could initially start with fewer stations and with fewer round trips. As more funding becomes available, further construction could be implemented to expand service. The specific phasing of the passenger rail system is not known at this time but will be determined as funding is allocated and as part of Tier 2 NEPA review.

Figure 8-1 illustrates some possible implementation phases using the Yellow Corridor Alternative as an example.

8.7.1 Station Locations and Airport Access

Station Locations

This Draft Tier 1 EIS does not identify specific station locations for analysis. Conceptual locations were included in the AA to provide a basis for corridor definition and ridership forecasting. As part of the AA, various station typologies were developed to provide context for station decision-making and local commitments; however, the exact locations of stations will require more analysis and further agency and community input. These will be part of independent localized studies and a Tier 2 NEPA document for a passenger rail facility if a corridor alternative is selected in the Tier 1 EIS.

Airport Connections

During the AA and the Draft Tier 1 EIS corridor analyses, airport access was identified as an important consideration among the public's preferences as a feature of future passenger rail service. All three major airports in the study corridor, i.e., Tucson International Airport (TIA), Phoenix-Mesa Gateway Airport (AZA), and Sky Harbor International Airport (PHX), are shown in **Figure 8-1** as being connected to the future passenger rail line, but a detailed evaluation of specific alignments, impacts, or other implications of how the connections would be accomplished has not taken place. These analyses will be undertaken as part of future studies if FRA selects a corridor alternative in their Record of Decision.